

PROFESSOR JARMILA TÁRNYIKOVÁ'S BIRTHDAY



The approaching birthday of Professor PhDr. Jarmila Tárníková, CSc., marks a stage in the development of her professional pursuits that might have been predicted at the very beginning of her academic career. In spite of the large number and diversity of the linguistic disciplines she has been engaged in — those listed in *Who is Who in the History of Czech Linguistics*¹ include morphology, syntax, text linguistics, pedagogic grammar, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, typological comparison of English and Czech, and the language of literary text — an increasingly discernible tendency appears in her work towards addressing points of the highest level of the language system, in particular the pragmatic and discoursal aspects. In fact the first subject matter that opens the long list of her publications,² English modals, several times addressed in the late seventies and early eighties of the last century, may have provided a lasting inspiration in this respect. The modals were also the topic of Professor Tárníková's CSc. dissertation, and it was in connection with this work that I first came to be acquainted with her. Her teacher, Ivan Poldauf, the founder of English studies at Palacký University in Olomouc, had by then moved to Prague and brought me the dissertation to read, remarking on the novel aspects of the work and the high quality of its elaboration. I also remember how Josef Vachek welcomed the discourse aspect of her work (specifically her article on the pragmatic dimension in syntax, illustrated by pragmatically based subclassification of imperative sentences, pragmatically bound sentence cohesion and pragmatically based decoding of speaker's attitudes, cf. *Philologica Pragensia* 1985/3, 170–175). Professor Tárníková's discourse approach to syntax appears in the titles of most of her syntactic works (see Note 2).

Among Czech Anglicists she is primarily known as a text linguist, and this is certainly borne out by her research conducted in the last five years that have elapsed since her previous celebration year.³ Moreover, as we are used to in her work, her approach is complex, extending to information packaging and covering configurations with discourse markers and the syntactic structure with its realization forms. The leitmotif running through her present work is the role of shell nouns in the text build-up. They are characterized as a relatively marginal type of focus formulas and specified as *the trouble/problem/fact/ ... is that ...* Without explicitly referring to the Czech FSP theory of information structure, this line of her work makes a contribution to the elaboration of the diathematic section, in particular with respect to the devices operating as the starting point.⁴ Deriving their denomination from the gen-

1 Jiří Černý, Jan Holeš, *Kdo je kdo v dějinách české lingvistiky*. Libri, Prague 2008: 635–637.

2 Cf. Selected Bibliography of the Publications of Professor PhDr. Jarmila Tárníková, CSc., *Linguistica Pragensia* XVIII/2 (2008): 92–94.

3 Jaroslav Peprník, Prof. PhDr. Jarmila Tárníková, CSc. *Linguistica Pragensia* XXIII/1 (2013): 65–66. Cf. also Jaroslav Macháček, Jarmila Tárníková's Birthday, *Linguistica Pragensia* VIII/2 (1998): 89–90.

4 Cf. Mathesius' conception of the theme (basis of the utterance) as the element about which something is stated or a notion that naturally presents itself (*A Functional Analysis of Present day English on a General Linguistic Basis*, Prague, Academia 1975: 81–82).



eral notion of the denoted concepts, the shell nouns point forward to the core of the message in which the general term is made explicit and occurs, as the subject complement, in the post-verbal part of the sentence. These constructions with shell nouns can thus be regarded as a special type of diathematic sentence opening.

Professor Tárnyiková's present work is included in an official project entitled "The dual role of shell nouns in information packaging". The point under study concerns two seemingly different manifestations of focus formulas with shell nouns, viz. as relatively stable utterance openings, or as looser configurations, co-occurring with various discourse markers. The aim of her research is to contribute to the insights into the interface between discourse and grammar, on the assumption that configurations of shell nouns with discourse markers enrich the focalizing role of the former by pragmatically-based communicative strategies associated with facework. Two contributions to the elaboration of this project have appeared in print: "Where focus formulas and discourse markers meet" and "Constructions with shell nouns: their dual role in information packaging".⁵ The Prague colleagues of Professor Tárnyiková had a chance to hear her lecture on "Information packaging in text: the case of shell nouns", given in the seminar Discourse Relations in Multilingual Context (Kontakt II) in October 2016. In this contribution the most general of the shell nouns, *thing*, was discussed in detail. In contrast to the other shell nouns it leaves the specification of the point at issue entirely free, and hence can serve as a translation counterpart of Czech subjectless sentences of the type *jedná se o* (cf. German *es handelt sich um*).

In addition to her research work and numerous other activities, among which we should not neglect to mention her standing as a high-ranking pedagogue, Professor Tárnyiková has been faithfully standing sentinel to *Linguistica Pragensia* in her capacity of associate editor, lending it the wide scope of her expertise.

Let me wish her many more fruitful years of enriching work and personal happiness.

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⁵ Respectively, in *Discourse and Interaction* 8/2 (2015): 65–83 (jointly with Silvie Válková) and *Caplletra* 64 (Primavera, 2018), *Revista Internacional de Filologia*: 205–225.